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Most people assume  
the danger of a trip-  
wire lies in the blast.





In Gotham, there is an old legend, a nursery rhyme about the Court of Owls.

A group of men who, the rhyme goes, rule the city from the shadows and enforce their will by means of an assassin named the Talon...

...a highly trained killer the Court keeps hidden in bases around the city.

Tonight, I discovered a series of such bases, seeming to date back to the 19th century—bases hidden in buildings constructed by my own family, the Waynes.

I was inspecting this one, the most recent, when the tripwire went off.

Lucky for me...



"...AND FRANKLY, I JUST CAN'T ACCEPT IT."

"TO BE FAIR, HE HAS TAKEN AN EXTRAORDINARY BIT OF PUNISHMENT OF LATE, MASTER RICHARD."

"BRUCE RESTING?"

"IT'S TRUE, SIR."

"AND HOW MANY DO YOU NEED TO SLIP HIM NOWDAYS...?"

"...ALFIE?"

"5 MILLIGRAMS."

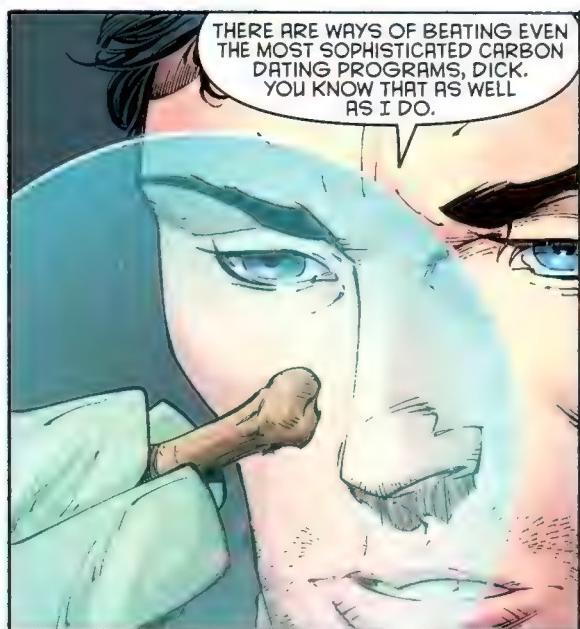
"5 MILLIGRAMS OF ACE? THAT'D BRING DOWN A--"

"I'M AWARE OF THE EFFECTS, MASTER RICHARD. NOW, I'M AFRAID I MUST RETURN TO MY DUTIES. IF THERE'S NOTHING ELSE YOU NEED...?"

BRUCE?  
BRUCE, ARE YOU AWAKE?







I DO...BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT YOU'RE BURNING IT AT BOTH ENDS ON THIS ONE. YOU'RE WORKING LIKE A MAN OBSESSED--OR MORE OBSESSED THAN USUAL--AND AS SUCH, IT'S POSSIBLE YOU'RE NOT SEEING THE FOREST FOR THE TREES.

ANALYSIS NEARLY COMPLETE...

CONTINUE.

THE POINT IS--

HOLD ON.  
I WAS TALKING TO  
THE COMPUTER.

COMPUTER--

BRUCE, WE'RE  
WORRIED ABOUT  
YOU, ALL RIGHT?

TWICE THIS  
MONTH YOU CAME CLOSE  
TO GETTING KILLED,  
AND SOME OF US THINK  
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE  
UNDERESTIMATING YOUR  
ENEMY HERE.

JIM SAID  
THAT?

YES, HE DID.  
THE JOHN DOE WHO  
CAME UP TO ME--A  
HIGHLY GHOSTED ID.  
HE'S KILLED BY AN  
ASSASSIN CALLING  
HIMSELF THE  
TALON.

YOU DROP THE GUY OFF A BUILDING  
AND HE GETS UP AND KILLS HIS  
RIDE TO THE MORGUE. NOW YOU  
DISCOVER THESE BASES, HIDDEN  
IN WAYNE BUILDINGS...

...BASES THAT  
SEEM TO BE FROM  
DIFFERENT DECADES  
DATING BACK TO THE  
1800s. HOW CAN YOU  
NOT BE A LITTLE  
APPREHENSIVE ABOUT  
WHAT MIGHT BE ON  
THE OTHER SIDE  
OF THE EQUAL  
SIGN HERE?

I'M BEING  
OBJECTIVE, DICK.  
LIKE I TAUGHT  
YOU TO BE.  
COMPUTER--RUN  
A SECONDARY TEST  
FOR SHALE.

RUNNING...

TAKE CARE,  
BRUCE. I HAVE A  
PLANE TO CATCH.



"OF COURSE, GROWING UP,  
I'D HEARD THE OLD LEGEND  
OF THE COURT OF OWLS."



"I'D ASKED MY FATHER  
ABOUT THEM, BUT  
HE ALWAYS LAUGHED  
OFF THE IDEA."



"BUT EVEN SO, IN THE DAYS BEFORE MY  
PARENTS' DEATH, THERE'D BEEN A SIGN."

"A NEST. AN OWL NEST IN  
THE ATTIC. HE'D SHOED  
THE BIRDS AWAY, BUT  
THEY'D COME BACK."



"IN AN OLDER VERSION OF THE  
RHYME, THERE'S A LINE ABOUT  
'HEEDING THE SIGNS,' THE  
OMENS OF THE COURT."

"IN THE AFTERMATH OF THEIR  
DEATH, I SAW THE NEST  
AS A SIGN, A WARNING MY  
PARENTS HADN'T HEeded."



"AND THEN AND THERE,  
I VOWED REVENGE."



"I WAS JUST A BOY, BUT I'D FIND  
THEM—THE COURT OF OWLS—AND  
I'D EXPOSE THEM. I'D CRUSH  
THEIR WORLD AS THEY HAD MINE."



"SO I BEGAN MY OWN INVESTIGATION INTO THE COURT. IN MANY WAYS, IT WAS MY FIRST CASE AS A DETECTIVE."

"AND I WAS DETERMINED TO SOLVE IT."

"IMMEDIATELY, CLUES BEGAN PRESENTING THEMSELVES."

"IN A MATTER OF DAYS, IT SEEMED EVERYWHERE I LOOKED THERE WAS SOME SIGN, SOME NEW PIECE OF EVIDENCE POINTING TO THE COURT'S EXISTENCE."

"SO I BEGAN DELVING DEEPER."

"IF THE COURT WAS MADE UP OF POWERFUL GOTHAM FAMILIES, THERE WAS NO BETTER PLACE TO START LOOKING THAN MY PARENTS' FRIENDS AND BUSINESS PARTNERS."

*Bat*

"DESPITE HIS WORK AS A DOCTOR, MY FATHER HAD BEEN DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE CIVIC MECHANICS OF GOTHAM. NOT JUST CHARITIES, BUT EVERYTHING FROM MUSEUMS TO THE GOTHAM SHIPYARD.

"ANYONE COULD BE ONE OF THE COURT. NO ONE COULD BE RULED OUT.

*Double Owl*

"IN THE COURSE OF JUST A FEW WEEKS, I'D COMPILED NOTES ON SOME OF GOTHAM'S MOST PROMINENT FAMILIES. TO MY MIND--THE MIND OF A BOY DETECTIVE, ALL OF IT WAS EVIDENCE--EVIDENCE OF A FAR-REACHING CONSPIRACY AGAINST MY FAMILY.

*Mar  
Jame*

"I'D EVEN LOCATED A BUILDING...AN OLD ABANDONED SOCIAL CLUB WITH A DOUBLE OWL ON THE CREST: A PLACE CALLED HARBOR HOUSE. IT WAS--"

*Harbor*

"I KNOW IT."

*Street*

"ALL OF THE FAMILIES I SUSPECTED HAD BELONGED TO THE CLUB AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.

*ca  
cra  
er  
ated*

"AND LOOKING AT THE SCHEMATICS OF THE BUILDING, I'D DISCOVERED A ROOM IN THE UPPER TOWER--WHAT LOOKED LIKE A WINDOWLESS MEETING PLACE, RIGHT ABOVE THE CREST OUTSIDE."

I WAS SURE  
THIS WAS IT



I HAD FOUND THE  
COURT OF OWLS.  
THE MEN BEHIND  
MY PARENTS' DEATH.



BUT WHAT I ACTUALLY  
FOUND THAT NIGHT...



...UP THERE IN THAT SECRET  
ROOM, WAS SOMETHING  
MUCH MORE FRIGHTENING...





"JUST AN OLD, EMPTY  
ROOM THAT HADN'T  
BEEN USED IN YEARS."

"I WAS SO SHOCKED  
I DIDN'T SEE THE DOOR  
CLOSE BY MY FOOT."



"I WAS LOCKED  
UP THERE FOR  
OVER A WEEK"



"WHEN ALFRED  
FINALLY FOUND ME,  
I WAS ALREADY  
COMATOSE."

I SPENT THREE WEEKS IN THE HOSPITAL, RECOVERING.

WHEN I WOKE UP, THOUGH, I'D LEARNED A VALUABLE LESSON. A LESSON I BUILT MY SKILLS AS A DETECTIVE ON.

NEVER LET YOUR EMOTIONS GUIDE YOU ON A CASE.

I NEEDED THERE TO BE A COURT OF OWLS. SOME GREAT EVIL BEHIND MY PARENTS' MURDER. I LET THAT NEED GUIDE MY INVESTIGATION AND IT ALMOST KILLED ME.

YOU WERE JUST A KID, BRUCE.

I'VE LOOKED INTO THE COURT SINCE THEN AND ALWAYS COME UP EMPTY.

HOW HARD HAVE YOU LOOKED, THOUGH?

DEEPER THAN THE EVIDENCE WARRANTED.

BECUSE THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY.

LOOK, BRUCE. NO ONE KNOWS GOTHAM BETTER THAN YOU. IT'S YOUR CITY. IT'S BATMAN'S CITY...

...BUT IT'S ALSO NEARLY FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OLD, WHICH MEANS, OVER THE YEARS, MAYBE IT BELONGED TO SOMETHING ELSE, TOO. SOMETHING BIG. SOMETHING DARK."

"I HAVE TO GO."  
"I HAVE A LEAD TO FOLLOW UP ON."





My great, great grandfather Alan Wayne was behind the construction of some of Gotham's tallest towers.

His naked body was discovered here, beneath the city, in the sewers. The corpse had been down here so long that Alan had to be identified by the fillings in his teeth.

A nightmarish end for a man who spent so much time building Gotham up, to drown in its sewage.

The dirty blood of the city he helped build.

There are worse ways to go, though.

Like the way he actually went. Because examining his body myself, I discovered tiny punctures—not unlike stab wounds—in his bones. A lot of his bones, too.

Which is to say he was stabbed to death, most likely by throwing knives.

Almost fifty of them.



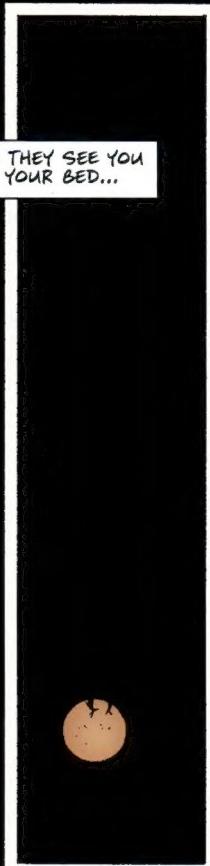


"THE COURT OF OWLS  
WATCHES, WATCHES  
ALL THE TIME."

"RULING GOTHAM FROM A  
SHADOWED PERCH, BEHIND  
GRANITE AND LIME."



"THEY SEE YOU AT  
YOUR HEARTH."



"AND THEY SEE YOU  
IN YOUR BED..."



"... SPEAK NOT A  
WHISPERED WORD  
ABOUT THEM..."



"... OR THEY'LL  
SEND THE  
TALON FOR  
YOUR HEAD!"

WELCOME,  
BATMAN, TO THE  
LABYRINTH!

DC COMICS presents

BATMAN in

# FACE the COURT

SCOTT SNYDER

writer pencils inks

JONATHAN GLAPION

GREG CAPULLO

RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S

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FCO colors

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BATMAN CREATED BY

BOB KANE



**T**

wo weeks ago, we ended on the cliffhanger of Eddie Berganza getting shot. Rest assured, Eddie lives, snoring through a deep coma and eating through a tube. There's no way we'd kill him off. For starters, Blackest Night assured that death in the DCU is permanent. More important, there are so many suspects, the investigation would drag on for years.

Last week, Rachel Gluckstern detailed the average day of an editor, giving a real sense of what goes into the job. And since this column is supposed to provide a peek behind the scenes, I'm going to talk about meetings.

Wow. Meetings. Sounds boring, right? Wrong! The initial arcs of the New 52 books were designed to lay down the foundation for each title and character. Now it's time to start threading themes and continuity through the books, weaving them together to form a cohesive universe. Yesterday, I lunched with Bobbie Chase, Katie Kubert, Pat McCallum, Sean Mackiewicz and Chris Conroy. The topic was the Daemonites, those creepy alien villains making life difficult for the titular characters of GRIFTER and VOODOO.

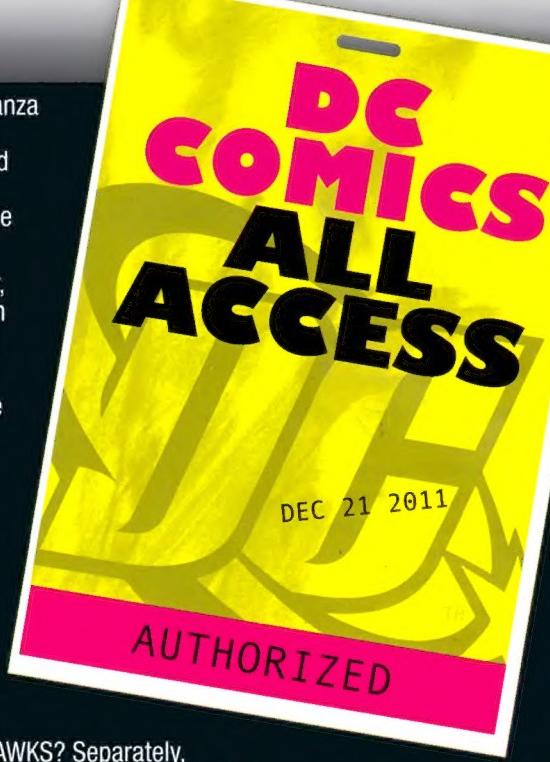
The reason we have meetings like this is to find potential to enhance the individual stories, thread them through other books and find some unexpected directions for both story and book involvement. Would you believe the threat of the Daemonites extends to STORMWATCH, DEMON KNIGHTS, and even... BLACKHAWKS? Separately, the stories were quite strong and definitely exciting. Together, they form a cohesive epic that you can enjoy whether you read all these books or just stick with your personal favorites. The point is, life happens in the DCU, and it affects all who inhabit it.

So keep your eyes peeled for those titles as we ratchet up the threat of the Daemonites and take the story to places you can't imagine.

-Matt Idelson, who shot Eddie and rather enjoyed it.

## *Happy Holidays To All!*

Including Eddie Berganza!



AUTHORIZED



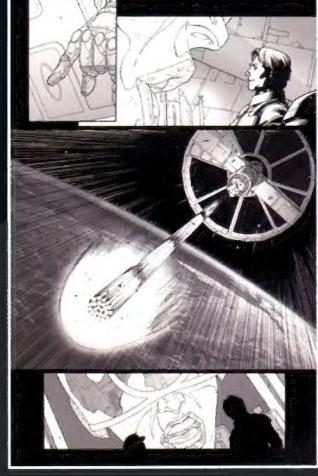
Voodoo #5 Cover



Grifter #6 Cover



Stormwatch #6 Cover



Interior page for Blackhawks #5

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